

# مجلة جامعة الرازي للعلوم الإدارية والإنسانية RUHMS

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## Wasini Al-a'raj's Dystopian Prophecy in 2084: The Story of the Last Arab

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### Abstract

*This paper argues that Wasini Al-a'raj's novel 2084: The Story of the Last Arab\_(2016) is an example of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Arabic dystopian fiction. The narrative is engaged in an intertextual relationship with many past and contemporary texts and voices to resist and subvert the ongoing imperial ideology targeting the Arabs and their sovereignty. My way of reading this narrative is relying on the textual analysis to unravel the aesthetics of the text. The main objective is to display how the writer applies the innovative aspects such as intertextuality, fragmentation, double-voicedness and metafiction to attack the sources of corruption that control the Arabs and their lives in a rapidly changing world. The novel positions itself as a surprise to the contemporary reader due to the multiplicity of embedded discourses that decorate the narrative and thematic structures of the story in its postmodern texture.*

**Keywords:** dystopia, intertextuality, prophecy, Amereuopa, circumcision

### Introduction

This paper analyzes *2084: The Story of the Last Arab* (2016) , henceforth *2084* in which the novelist seems to predict a terrifying prophecy about Arabs and their marginal and deteriorating situation in a rapidly changing world. The primary aim for this article is to situate *2084* in the literary project of dystopia which is a key defining characteristic of the Post-Mahfouzian novel. I think that once the novel is translated into English or French, it will be approached by and accessible to a wide variety of international readership. Translation plays crucial role in the growth and maturity of the novel as a genre in contemporary Arabic narrative fiction. Such writers as Naguib Mahfouz and Abdel Rahman Munif (considered by many western critics as the two great MS of contemporary Arabic narrative fiction) achieved international fame and recognition only through translation. This is because translation circulates the national works and pushes them into wider and broader arenas once they become available in other languages.

The Arabic novel has undergone a remarkable transformation in the decades following the pioneering works of Naguib Mahfouz and Abdel Rahman Munif. Whereas these earlier authors predominantly utilized more conventional and linear narrative techniques (Allen 1995), Arabic novels published in the first two decades of the 21st century reflect a remarkable departure from these traditional structures. Contemporary Arab novelists have embraced a greater degree of formal experimentation, incorporating innovative narrative strategies such as fragmentation,

nonlinearity, stream of consciousness, epigraphs, and the employment of multiple perspectives in the Bakhtinian sense (Meyer 2001).

In fact, the post-Mahfouzian novel has expanded beyond the sociopolitical realism and historical sagas that defined previous novels by Mahfouz and Munif. The emerging novels of contemporary writers like Wasini Al-a'raj encompass a wider range of human experiences, including psychological introspection and existential questioning of the collective Arab existence in a rapidly changing world. Themes such as terrorism, oil depletion, the Palestinian question, and regional/international conflicts over natural resources are now being explored by Arab novelists in the post-Mahfouzian era. As an example of this new literary phase, Al-a'raj's work grapples with the legacy of colonialism and its attendant issues of oppression, subjugation, annihilation, and unchecked assimilation.

Wasini Al-a'raj is a distinguished Algerian novelist, short story writer and academic. He was born in Tlemcen, Algeria in 1954. He studied at the university of Algiers where he got a B.A. in Arabic Language and literature. Then, he travelled to Syria where he obtained an M.A. and a PhD with a dissertation entitled "Trends in the Arabic Novel in Algeria: A Study of the Historical and Aesthetic Roots of the Algerian Novel" from the university of Damascus. Having finished his study, Al-a'raj returned to his country and started to teach at the University of Algiers until 1994. However, due to the uprising of violence and political unrest that erupted in Algeria, he moved to Paris where he joined the faculty of the Université Paris III-New Sorbonne as a professor of Arabic literature.

Al-a'raj is a prolific writer writing and publishing in Arabic and French. He has written many novels dealing with Algeria's history and its harsh upheavals. Recently, he has produced work on the tragedies of the Arab nation, questioning the sacred and static account of its history. In addition to his novels, Al-a'raj, along with his wife Zineb Al-a'raj, an accomplished poet, compiled an anthology on African literature in French titled *Anthologie de la nouvelle narration africaine*. His commitment with Arabic literature gave him a remarkable international recognition. The organizers of the prestigious award in the field of Art and literature nominated Wasini for 2023 Award in recognition for "his outstanding literary contribution to the Algerian and Arabic novel". The works of Al-a'raj, according to the Award's organizers "stand out for the innovative use of new methods of linguistic expression in the novel, enriching the Arab imagination and narration," especially that his works "belong to the new school to explore new expressive paths, thus leaving his mark on the Algerian and Arab novel," (Coroatia, 2023)

In the footnote of 2084, Al-a'raj cites the American Diplomat W. Patrick Syring profane statement "The only good Arab is a dead Arab," in July 2006. (Johnson, 2008) According to the *Washington Post* website, the message delivered as a voice-mail message to the Arab American Institute Chairman James Zogby and other employees. This reference to the American diplomat along with many other devices such as epigrams, footnotes, quotations, the use of many foreign words from other languages especially French is one of the characteristics of the Post-Mahfouzian Arabic novel.

Inspired by present conditions in the Arab world, Wasini Al-a'raj constructs a narrative in which an imaginary situation to the socio-political realities of the Arabs in the aftermath of the oil depletion. A close reading to the text reveals that the novelist provides a dystopian image of Arabs that are trapped in a complicated reality in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as well. It is this dystopian dimension that marks the point of departure to approaching Al-a'araj text in an attempt to explore this 'new literary mode by examining the underlying motive that drive Arab youth to upraise and protest. Rawad Alhashimi (Alhashmi, 2023) points out in a scholarly article " Mapping Arabic Dystopian Novels: Double-Edged Sword" (2023) that:

The emergence of dystopian novels in the new millennium constitutes a groundbreaking development in modern Arabic literature. Influenced by the translation of Western dystopian literature, the rise of the genre has been triggered by revolutionary changes in the sociopolitical spheres in many parts of the Arab-speaking world. ( p 147)

Having stated that the narrative is dystopian in nature, then, I could say that Al-a'raj has joined several Arab novelists such as Ahmed Khalid Tawfik, Basma Abdel Aziz and Mohammed Rabie that adopted dystopia to engage with many pressing geopolitical, sociopolitical and cultural issues characterizing the Arab world in the post-Arab spring period. However, while the above mentioned novelists' works that subscribed to the dystopian genre are marked by what could be called ' Egyptiocentricism' in terms of setting, theme, motifs and characters, 2084's tale depicts a dystopian future for the Arab world without sticking to one specific locale. Thus, author's critique of the self-destructive nature of the Arab revolutions, where the desire for change and democracy led to increased violence, fragmentation, and the undermining of existing state structures form the novelistic ingredient of this narrative. Translation is an important tool that brought the Arabic novel an international presence and recognition. Such novels as Ahmed Khaled Towfik's *Utopia*, Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*, and Rabie's *Otared* have been translated into English, 2084 still is only available in Arabic.

One remarkable thing that attracts the reader of this narrative is a three-paragraph- epigraph from the very beginning. Both the content and sources from which these paragraphs are taken are suggestive. Critically speaking, among the many functions an epigraph could perform, it can situate a narrative within a broader cultural, historical, or literary context. By referencing the work of another author, the novelist invites the reader to draw connections and make intertextual associations, enriching the reading experience. Consequently, the novelist provides a three-passage-epigraph from three different texts and contexts. This is perhaps to effectively set the mood for the story, guide the readers' expectations, frame the thematic concerns and above all establish a shared interpretive framework of analysis between him and the reader. The three given passages are in Arabic and for a better understanding, I deem it significant to provide them in English since they are the foundations of my critical approach to the novel.

The very first passage is a quotation from Abdulrahman Ibn Khaldun, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Arab intellectual, the second is a quoted passage from George Orwell's novel *1984* and the third passage is taken from *The Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler. The epigraph reads as the following:

1. "The Arabs are rivals in their pursuit of power, and it is said that none of them will submit this matter (leadership) to another, even if that other is his father, brother, or clan chief - except perhaps out of the bare minimum of deference, and against their true inclinations, purely for the sake of survival. As a result, there are many rulers and princes among them. Their hands differ in how they administer their subjects and render judgments, and so their civilization has become corrupted and diminished. Consider what they have taken possession of and overpowered, from the lands created in the beginning - how their construction of it has been undermined, the inhabitants impoverished, and the very nature of the land transformed. The architecture was once that of the Persians, and the Levant shared in this design as well. Africa and Morocco too... but all of its infrastructure has now returned to ruin, after the entire expanse between the Sudan and the Roman Sea was once urbanized, as evidenced by the remnants - the monuments, statues, and tombstones from the villages that once stood".(Quoted in Al-a'raj, 2016, p 7)

2. "There is no possibility that any perceptible change will happen within our own lifetime. We are the dead. Our only true life is in the future. We shall take part in it as handfuls of dust and splinters of bone. But how far away that future may be, there is no knowing. It might be a thousand year. At present nothing is possible. ( Orwell, 1967, p 242).

3. "Our press and schools instill chauvinism, a military mentality, dogmatism, complicity, and ignorance. There is no limit to the arbitrary tyranny of the government, which remains unique in history. Freedoms of the press, opinion, and the right to organize have completely disappeared, as if the Declaration of Human Rights had never existed. We have built the largest security apparatus, where small informants have become a self-standing national institution, after being reinforced by a highly sophisticated system of psychological and physical torture. We lead the thirsty masses towards an illusive happiness. We alone know its limits". This passage is from "The Darkness at Noon" by Arthur Koestler, translated by Kalmann Lévy, and published in 1945. (Quoted in Al-a'raj, 2016, p 7)

A close reading to the three passages is important for unraveling the thread of *2084*. Ibn Khaldun in this passage expresses his judgment about Arabs and their tendency to absolute authority once one of them is in power and their propensity to destruction in case the ruler detects opposition. In this passage, Ibn Khaldun describes the political rivalries and power struggles among Arab rulers that lead to the "corruption and diminishment" of civilization. Ibn Khaldun's passage reflects the power struggles and rivalries among Arab rulers, where "none of them submits the matter to someone else" and "there are many rulers among them and princes." The Arabs' propensity to destruction is indicated when " all of its[the Arab World] infrastructure has now returned to ruin due to the failed unfinished revaluations. Perhaps, the fictional world of *2084* undergoes similar fate!

Orwell's passage is significant in that it conveys a sense of hopelessness and resignation in the face of a utilitarian state apparatus where the narrator negates any hope of change and that people are described as "dead". The characters are described as "handfuls of dust and splinters of bone" reflecting a gloomy picture of the present that has no hope as they place their only hope in a distant, nebulous "future" that may be "a thousand years" away. This detachment from the immediate reality of their circumstances is a common trope in dystopian narratives. In fact,



a clear temporal disorientation is detected because there is no distinction between past, present and future. This disorientation is a common feature of a dystopian fictional world which might recur in Al-a'raj's *2084*.

Additionally, Koestler in his quoted lines, as a former communist enthusiast, critiques the ways in which the press, schools, and other societal institutions actively "instill chauvinism, a military mentality, dogmatism, complicity, and ignorance" in the public. Furthermore, the passage highlights the creation of "the largest security apparatus" and a "highly sophisticated system of psychological and physical torture," suggesting the lengths to which the state will go to monitor, control, and subjugate its citizens. This theme of pervasive surveillance and brutal repression seems to be central to the thematic structure of *2084*.

Wasini Al-a'raj from the very out set introduces us into a world of misery, hopelessness, destruction, suffering and harsh realities. Each passage in the epigraph is rooted in a specific historical and cultural context. Ibn Khaldun's 14th century Arab world where corruption and fragmentation characterize the geopolitical situation. Orwell provides post-WWII bleak vision of Europe, where the ideals of democracy, freedom, and self-determination have been systematically eroded, leaving the continent in the grip of oppressive, totalitarian control. Koestler's novel, like Orwell's narrative offers a critical view of totalitarian regimes and the erosion of individual freedoms under such systems of power. *Darkness at Noon* examines the psychological mechanisms that sustain totalitarian regimes, exploring the ways in which individuals become complicit in their own subjugation. Overall the content of the three passages precludes to and prepare the ground for what is going to happen in the narrative space of *2084*.

By engaging these three passages with their mutual focus on the decline of the societal values, the erosion of individual freedoms and struggle for absolute power that lead to the corruption and diminishment of civilization, Al-a'raj sets the mood for the fictional world of *2084*.

### **Colonial Legacies and Arab Complicity**

*2084* opens with a scene in Amereupa, a colonial military base established in West Arabia run by an American commander called Little Broz or General Malcom Blair. This character claims to belong to the Blair family and has a direct blood relationship to the Big brother of Orwell's novel *1984*. The intertextual relationship between *2084* and *1984* extends to cover the way the main character Little Broz has designed his castle to equip it with the most highly advanced technological devices of surveillance including smart touch screens, digital cameras and biometric ways of detecting peoples' identity. Not only, this dictatorial figure aims to control people totally, but also he goes further to alter the history and destiny of those whom he rules. The narrator relates a scene in which this character is celebrating his grandfather's centennial birth anniversary (Big Brother) addressing the attendants:

There are nations that only become useful when they turn to ashes. We give them the chance to emerge from their ashes and enter a history they have hovered on its margins, to continue living on the earth. Our only condition is that they should believe in our slogan: All for the One. And the One is the Master of all. (Al-a'raj, 2016, p. 12)

In this passage a firm grips of totalitarianism is detected which resonates with Orwell's novel regarding how the party changes history of people. The divided Arabs are definitely the targeted nation this character speaks to. The diction of this passage is characteristic of totalitarian regimes with the emphasis on the singular "One" and the idea of being "the Master of all" which suggests an absolute acquisition of power. The idea of nations only becoming "useful" when they "turn to ashes" suggests a willingness to destroy existing identities, cultures, societies in order to impose a new, totalitarian order. The dystopian dynamics is reflected in the reference to nations "hovering on the margins of history" suggests a disregard for the unique histories, cultures, and identities of these nations, which totalitarianism seeks to incorporate under its own hegemonic influence. Little Broz discourse continues its tone of degrading and marginalizing those coming under his control portrays the Arab world sliding into chaos leading to the rise of a totalitarian ideology.

The Arabs in the aftermath of the failing revolutions of the Arab Spring are portrayed in a negative way where famine, poverty and sectarian violence as their main characteristics. In his attempt to account for the Arab people predicament, the narrator describes the situation in Arabian land saying:

In Arabia, there have been relentless wars that have torn it apart and caused death. It began with limited divisions, whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, before it turned into an endless futile war. Within Arabia, there are many Arabias, Shia and Sunni, Druze and Armenians, Kurds and Amazighs, who have not been recognized with any rights. The rest stand on fragile ground. The difference between Arabia and the rest of the world is that, despite violence, the latter listens to resolve conflicts, as in Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, India, Pakistan, France, the United States, China, Russia, and others. But Arabia has not been given a chance to reflect on its situation due to the madness, greed, and failures of its rulers. As wars intensify and poverty deepens, disintegration becomes rapid and significant, making it difficult to control. (Al-a'raj, 140-41)

This passage summarizes and brings together the primary causes of the miserable situation of the imaginary Arabs dwelling the narrative space. Many reasons account for the deteriorating situation of the people of Arabia as mentioned above. The sectarian violence erupting between the various ethnic groups dwelling the locale especially between the Shia and Sunnah was the main drive that had negative impact on them. Besides the imaginary drought of the oil reservoirs predicted by the narrator and the subsequent economic collapse has worsen their situation. The world is changing rapidly whereas the Arabs seem to develop a surprising sensitive immunity to change. As Little Broz observes:

Look at the Arab people, when the oil used to flow in front of their homes and they could buy whatever they wanted from Europe. They used to enslave and despise everyone. What is left for them now but wandering and slow death! Those who you see lost in the sand were miserable even at the height of the oil flow, money, and stock markets that created papers and money, but did not create a single worthy homeland to be respected. ( p. 63) .

Through these words, the novelist portrays a dystopian future based on an unpleasant present as he witnesses it both as an observer and participant. This passage is significant since it suggests a deep sense of fragmentation and loss of identity for the Arabs that are left with

nothing but "wandering and slow death". Time has changed for these people and there is a transformation in their life style. There is a decline in both prosperity and authority. Gone is the time when they used to purchase whatever they want from the markets of London, Paris, Geneva and Frankfurt among many other European cities. No longer, they are able to bring maids and servants from Indonesia, Vietnam and Ethiopia. The material decline is parallel by a moral and spiritual decline for these people have lost the capability to "enslave and despise everyone". The images of homelessness and hopelessness are reinforced by such expressions as "lost in sand", "miserable" that suggest further bleakness and marginalization. This perhaps explains what the novelist means by the epigraph that precedes the first chapter of the novel which reads as "I hope this doesn't happen. It's just a cry before it's too late. I already know in advance that the concerned person with it will never hear of it." (P. 8)

Having witnessed the ongoing political, social, dogmatic and sectarian conflicts that have plagued the Arab world and the middle East in the recent years, Wasini gives a warning to the Arab societies in general and those in power in particular inviting them to reconsider their situation. The phrase "just a cry before it is too late" reflects the novelist's vision that the geopolitical issues of the intended targets of his criticism face numerous existential challenges. The reference to the Arabian people's failing revolutions of the so called 'Arab Spring' and the subsequent chaos and anarchy in such countries as Yemen, Syria, Tunisia and Libya is perhaps, one cause of the writer's bleak vision that dominate the whole novel. To prevent this extinction, the United Nation established a special international committee called *LIDRAFIC, or Ligue des Droits des races en fin de cycle*. This acronym describes the mission and vision of a humanitarian association for which Eva, the kind Swedish lady works as its envoy. The following statement, said by a non-Arab, perhaps a member of the *LIDRAFIC* association summarizes the current status of the indigenous people inhabiting the narrative space.

The Arabs, who used to live in great prosperity, are now trapped in the storms of wandering and the sands of fire and death. People make mistakes when they think that wealth and power are immortal. Everything is more fragile than the wings of a butterfly. Humanity needs a constant reminder of its weakness. (p. 165).

Al-a'raj provides a social criticism to the state of affairs that are likely to happen to the Arabs if they did not capture the international upheavals and cope with them. Perhaps, the writer draws the attention of Arab leaders that the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East is changing. There is a portrayal of the declining of economic factors such as oil that vanishes in a wink of an eye. By losing oil and its revenues, Arabs influence in the global atmosphere will retreat giving rise to new international players such as Turkey, China, Iran and Russia.

The novelist goes further in his warning to the fragmented Arab tribes reminding them the global geopolitical landscape is changing as well. The choice of building Amereuopa in the depth of Arabia is not arbitrary. It is based on strategic planning to serve many political, economic and geological purposes. The narrator describes the situation saying:

The location of Amereuopa is strategic and important, as it is located in a central region which controls a significant portion of the world's oil, or what remains of it. For this reason, the

occupation of the Strait of Hormuz after a sea and air war was a vital matter, which allowed the European Federations, Azaria, and America to unite and the emergence of the Amereupa Alliance, while the second alliance, Ruchinarria, to which Russia, China, and Iran joined, became an a concrete reality. Europe had been torn apart, and the Amereupa Alliance firmly gathered its edges. (p. 49)

In this passage, the novelist portrays a dystopian vision of the embedded change of the geopolitical landscape surrounding the Arab world. Firstly, the strategic importance of the location of "Amereupa" in controlling a significant portion of the world's declining oil resources echoes the real-world geopolitical realities of the Gulf region. The novelist's depiction of the imaginary occupation of the Strait of Hormuz and the subsequent formation of two opposing alliances –Amereupa and Ruchinarria – reflects the long-standing tensions and power struggles over the control of oil in the Middle East.

Furthermore, the significance of this passage extends beyond the immediate narrative. It can be seen as a metaphor for the larger predicament facing the Arab world in the face of rapid modernization, the influence of external powers, and the uneven distribution of wealth and power. The novelist dystopian vision, rooted in the realities of the Arab oil-producing countries (mainly Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Qatar, Oman, Algeria, and Libya) serves as a warning cry about the need for the Arab world to navigate these complex challenges with foresight, resilience, and a strong sense of identity and self-determination. Perhaps this is what the novelist means by saying "I hope this doesn't happen. It's just a cry before it's too late. I already know that the concerned person with it will never hear it." (9)

### **Western Influence and Domestication of Dystopia**

In the Western dystopian novels, the themes of probable devastating wars using atomic weapons or threats of nuclear bombs tend to be a narrative pattern following the mass destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This dystopian tradition, according to Edward Ritter, has been established and supported by Ray Bradbury in his novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Bradbury as Ritter argues has built before his readers' eyes a world which has been racked by war and threats of war such as bombarding Japan in the second World War II. Based on the horror realities of the atomic bomb, Montag, the main character in Bradbury's novel, predicts that there were two nuclear wars in the sixties that would bring death and destruction to the world. The idea of using an atomic bomb has been used again in the 1950s by John Wyndham in his novel *The Chrysalids* (1955). Wyndham in this novel depicts a society surviving a nuclear war returns not to barbarism but to a rural life without machines.

The American writer Walter Miller has brought again the idea of nuclear war and its impact on the concerned society in his novel *Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959). Miller describes a narrative spaces whose population has been attacked by a nuclear weapon causing them to revert to tribal ways of life rather than returning them into barbarism.

Similarly, the underpinnings of this narrative pattern of decorating the western dystopian novel thematic structures with nuclear wars and nuclear weapons are present in *2084*. Adam Gharib the central character or "The Last Arabic" (Al-a'raj, 2016, p 18) as he describes himself is an Arab-American scientist whose academic major is nuclear physics.

### **Islamophobia and American Imperialism**

Through the characterization of both Little Broz, General Malcom Blair, and the Arab – American Dr. Adam Gharib, the novelist provides a multi-layered criticism attacking many targets simultaneously. For example, Dr. Adam Gharib is portrayed as an Arab emigrant that has been educated in the American academia where he excels in the field of nuclear physics. His academic enterprise qualify him to be nominated for the Nobel prize for nuclear physics.

He is married to a Japanese woman who is the granddaughter of Tsutomu Yamaguchi. According to Wikipedia ("Tsutomu Yamaguchi",2024), Yamaguchi (1919-2010) was a Japanese marine engineer who survived both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings during World War II. Dr. Adam Gharib's wife Amayya Yamaguchi is found to be an expert in nuclear medicine whose mission is to treat the victims of the nuclear weapons. While her husband career is about inventing and developing tactic nuclear weapons, his wife dedicates her life to bring remedy to the nuclear weapons' radiation.

However, in spite of his American citizenship and professional excellence, he remains an inferior other to the American military institution represented by Little Broz. This American General looks down upon Dr. Adam and regards him as a foe for whom death is the best and ultimate choice. Dr. Adam for Little Broz is a primitive figure, a barbarian that whatever he does for the American imperialism, he is an enemy. Speaking to Mr. Malarmy (one of Little Broz's assistants) about Dr. Adam's character, he says:

For the first time, I feel a complete paralysis in front of someone who is supposed to be an enemy, and who must be resisted by all means. I had intended to relief him from the memory of his wretched self, so that he would become harmonious with a rapidly changing present. Even though he is the most intelligent Arab specimen that has grown up between the walls of our universities...( Al-a'raj, 2016, p 15)

Little Broz's declaration of feeling his " complete paralysis" in front of someone that is supposed to be an enemy suggests a deep sense of unease and discomfort with Dr. Adam Gharib's character. The repetition and the circulation of the slogan "The only good Arab is a dead Arab" in the smart and huge screens in Amereuopa reflects the persistent problem of Islamophobia and anti-Arab prejudice in American foreign policy and domestic politics. This mirrors current real-world issues such as the demonization of Arab and Muslim communities, the justification of surveillance and security measures targeting this character, and the dehumanization that has enabled past military interventions in the Arab world and the Middle-East.

On the other hand, Dr. Adam is portrayed as a totally passive Arab individual figure that is engaged in a personal quest to pursue his wife, rather than to reflect any interest in the plight of his Arab community that are dying on the gates of Amereuopa searching for food. This indifference to the suffering of his fellow Arabs suggests a critique of the Arab emigrants that scarified their cultural and communal identity for the sake of their own personal advancement and integrity.

Dr. Adam Gharib resembles the character of Dr. Faleh the central character in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's novel *The Ship*. Like Dr. Faleh, Dr Adam has gone so westernized that he has totally absorbed and internalized Western ideologies at the expense of his own native culture. He is infected with the disease of cultural contamination that results in his destruction. His loss is doubled for he lost contact with his community and was not accepted by the so called white masters. Dr. Adam's case represents the novelist criticism about the cultural assimilation and mimicry. This Arab intellectual aspires to blindly mimic the American way of life. He devotes his life to serve the American imperialism developing animosity with his own native community in an attempt to please his masters. Dr. Adam's hard work on inventing two nuclear bombs does not elevate him to the status of equality with those such as Little Broz and his cabinet. He remains an Arab " towards the end, they resemble one another. The criminal and he that looks innocent. The good Arab in the end is the dead one. (Al-a'raj 429) Franz Fanon in his critical masterpiece *Black Skin, White Masks*, the remarks, the third world intellectual when aspiring to mimic the colonizer; the "master" does not approve his act, making him a laughing stock for not being himself.

The narrative's depiction of Dr. Adam's indifference to the plight of his fellow Arabs, even as they face the consequences of American imperial ambitions, can be seen as a broader critique of the tendency among some Arabs to view the United States with a sense of admiration and appreciation, rather than with a critical eye.

By crafting the ambivalence of an Arab intellectual and his blind assimilation to the American culture and by depicting the way this assimilated and mimic Arab intellectual is received, Al-a'raj challenges the readers assumptions and encourages them to confront the complexities and contradictions inherent in the Arab-American encounter and experience. Thus the narrative serves as a warning message about the risks of blind assimilation and the co-option of the Arab intellectual and scientific expertise, and the need for a deeper reckoning with the realities of American imperialism and its impact on the Arab world. In doing so, the novel invites readers to reflect on the ways in which the desire for individual success and acceptance can sometimes come at the expense of collective solidarity and the defense of one's own cultural and political autonomy.

### **Little Broz Character**

Little Broz or General Malcom Blair as he introduces himself is the military commander of Amereuopa. From the beginning of the story Little Broz appears as a powerful man of authority that controls Amereuopa with might and power. A close critical analysis to the character of this military persona reveals that he represents the American imperialism and its oppressive, manipulative and hegemonic nature.

The Arabic community residing in the so called Arab world that is located in parts of Asia and Africa suffer from oppression, corruption, patriarchy and external intervention. Little Broz character that represents the 21<sup>st</sup> modified version of Orwell's character Big Brother stands for all that Orwellian character has done and much more. That's to say he has gone many steps further in his totalitarian and oppressive practices. In terms of physical appearance, Little Broz

is described by the narrator saying that: "No one knows his face except for the one picture leaked by a French journalist, ... in which Little Bros appears with a round face like an idiot boy, with a Big head as if he is in the last strip of brain cancer. His features are closer to *those of Mussolini* in his prime days " (Added emphasis Al-a'raj, p 14). The reference to the facial resemblance between Little Broz and the Italian fascist leader is not innocent but loaded with meanings. Besides, more than once, he boasts to his assistants that he adores many notorious historical figures like Hitler, Stalin, Eisenhower, and George W. Bush. The novelist has created a direct connection between many authoritative and genocidal leaders such as Hitler and Bush perhaps is relevant to the dystopian future he predicts for the Arabs. In other words, the physical comparison to Mussolini in particular is quite telling, as it evokes the fascist ideology and its accompanying racism, nationalism, and disdain for individual rights. This further reinforces the notion that Arabs, in this imagined future, will face systemic discrimination and marginalization at the hands of a regime that seems to actively emulate the tactics of history's most notorious oppressors.

Moreover, Little Broz manipulates language and ideology in order to consolidate his power and control over Amereuopa and its residents. A deeper look at the text indicates that Little Broz has consolidated his control to the narrative space and his subjects by upholding many more slogans that have their echoes in many Western dystopias.

Consequently, "Walk or die, Too much thinking harms thought, He that is not with us is against us, the most dangerous dreams are those that we do not permit, our main enemy is the alliance of Iruchina" are new slogans are circulated audio-visually marking the principles of Little Broz ruling ideology. However, the most significant slogan that captures the narrative theme is the one that reads as "the only good Arab is the dead one." This particular slogan is given much more emphasis for it has been displayed via all the screens of Amereuopa. Little Broz himself many times expresses his belief in this statement and asks his assistants to circulate it so that all residents of Amereuopa adopt it in theory and practice. Little Broz represents the sincere ugly aspects of imperialism and its oppressive measures. More or less, Little Broz is the mouthpiece of the new powerful colonial paradigm that runs the Arab world and the middle East. The words Al-a'raj puts into the mouth of Little Broz whenever he talks about Arabs are loaded with many Western ideological cargo such as fascism, racism, and white supremacy.

In fact, the dystopian aspect of 2084 would not be fully articulated without considering the role of Little Broz. It is this character's actions, speeches and behavior that gives the narrative its defining dystopian attributes. For example, Little Broz emerges as the embodiment of the totalitarian American authority controlling the society of Amereuopa. He inculcates in his subjects that he is the omnipresent, the all-knowing and the all-powerful leader of the fictional world of this military castle. His whole scale oppression is enhanced by mythical surveillance equipment. His constant monitoring to the private details of his ruled subjects particularly Dr. Adam Gharib's life at the base surpasses similar roles done by his fictional relative in Orwell's 1984, i.e. Big Brother. His continuous intrusion and invasion to Adam's privacy reflects that 2084 is Al-a'raj's dystopian contribution to the contemporary Arabic novel.

The novelist has created a world which is characterized by calamities at the individual and collective levels. Every character in this narrative has tragic flaw and enigmatic stamp. The situation of Little Broz castration is a case in point.

Little Broz character is significant as far as the American imperialism and its expansion in the Arab world in general and in the Gulf area is concerned. The space in which he operates is symbolic for it reflects the American interests in the Oil and Gas industry. One of the striking aspects of Little Broz character is his constant abuse of Arabs and their life style. The failure of Arabs to create a homeland to be respected is part of the dystopian imagery *2084* depicts. The novelist provides social criticism through this American character views on Arabs. General Malcom comments saying " An Arab does not become good unless he dies. A strange creature clinging to the leftovers of history till death. I do not know what he gets from such behavior. He kills himself by himself," (p 22). This fanatic judgment is foregrounded by his repetition of the American diplomat's statement given above that "The only good Arab is the dead one." This statement is double-voiced criticism that targets both Arabs and the Americans. On the one hand, it suggests the author is targeting the persistent anti-Arab racism and dehumanization that has justified American interventionism and exploitation of the region. On the other hand, it suggests that Arabs are important to Americans only as long as they provide Petrol and Oil. Once petrol declines, Arabs are of no values and they deserve nothing but death.

One last thing that defines the dystopian nature of this character is his castration. The fact that he lost his penis and is replaced by an artificial one is suggestive. In a way the author criticizing the emasculation of the American imperialism. The narrative tells us that He is searching for a suitable one but he has many conditions. As the narrator puts it,

Despite the great efforts that have been made in the past times, they have finally failed.... One of his most important conditions is that the transplanted organ should not be of an *Arab or black person*, whatever his religion is, and that it does not *have any sign of circumcision in the Islamic way* specifically. ( P 229).

The portrayal of the most powerful authority as castrated and his attempts to find a human replacement on the condition that it should not be of a Muslim or African body nor to be circumscribed holds symbolic meaning. Little Broz's persistence on specific requirements for the replacement penis - that it must not come from a Muslim or African body, and cannot be circumcised - suggests deeper symbolic meanings within the narrative. These stipulations appear to reflect an undercurrent of cultural and religious biases embedded in the protagonist's worldview or the broader societal attitudes being referenced by the novelist. The text seems to be drawing parallels between these fictional preferences and real-world issues of prejudice, exclusion and the dehumanization of minority communities that have intersected with broader political and imperial dynamics.

One important point to be mentioned is that there is a reference to a terrorism and a terrorist organization called Al-tandhim. Little Broz claims that he is in war with this group, yet at night Dr. Adam observes that suspicious cars come and some kind of exchange takes place between



unknown persons and soldiers that take boxes and pay money! Earlier in the narrative Little Broz is quoted saying:

They will say that I was smuggling the dead and murdered body organs. I have heard such leaks, and I will find out who was behind them, but this will only feed the legend further. Indeed thanks to me and my efforts, many of the senior officials and the wealthy, around the world, are still alive, and I will not hesitate to mention their names in my memoirs, *Marshall's Diaries in the Vortex of Isolation*, which have reached 3084 pages so far. This number, which many view as ominous, reduces my pain and excessiveness!" (31)

In this passage, Little Broz delineates the most dangerous and ambiguous aspect of his character. He exploits his role and power to achieve personal gains. He runs a dirty business which is described by Tony, another American character as "This cannot be anything other than organ smuggling." (393). General Malcolm declaration that many high ranking officers and wealthy responsible men around the world owe him their lives or are still alive because of his "efforts" suggests a complex web of political and financial connections. It seems that this monstrous character wields power and influence through mysterious and wicked means in his own imaginary life-long journey for fame and recognition. The allusion to his forthcoming memoirs with its existing volume of 3084 is symbolic of his moral decline and degradation.

It is only later in the narrative that Little Broz's real devilish achievements have been exposed to the reader as solid facts rather than as "leaks". One of his two consultants comments upon their departure saying " We will lose lucrative market for Body Organs." (419). Fernando Levi replies " The wealthy people of the world will know your worth and beauty, Oh Marshal. Those who carry today a kidney from Eastern Arabia, or eyes from Western Arabia, or a heart from Central Arabia, or a Somali liver, a lung or intestines from the desert, or an African organ, will know the bliss they are in. With trivial prices, they are able to extend their lives for a long time. They will know when they lose all of that." (420)

Overall, the character of Little Broz emerges as a deeply complex and multifaceted figure, whose portrayal encompasses elements of monstrosity, psychopathy, Orientalist tropes, emasculation, and ambiguous power dynamics. As a central character in the novel's exploration of the Arab world's dystopian future, Little Broz represents a troubling and provocative embodiment of the region's sociopolitical and cultural challenges, as well as the potential consequences of unchecked exploitation and moral decay.

Coming back to Ibn Khaldun's words and those of Orwell and Koalster, It is evident that Al-raj subscribes to the dystopian Arabic narrative fiction via *2084*. The novelist provides a scornful critique by which he attacks the Arab oil-producing countries suggesting that their behavior during the height of their wealth became arrogant and disdainful, "enslaving and despising everyone" around them. This critique highlights the ways in which the abundance of oil wealth fostered a sense of complacency and entitlement among some Arab nations, leading them to neglect the development of a true "homeland to be respected." These words echo Ibn Khaldun's words in the given epigraph describing Arabs' tendency to arrogance and self-

destruction. The novelist bleakest dystopian vision is summarized through the words that he has given to the mouth of Little Broz:

Look at the Arab people, when the oil used to flow in front of their homes and they could buy whatever they wanted from Europe. They used to enslave and despise everyone. What is left for them now but wandering and slow death! Those who you see lost in the sand were miserable even at the height of the oil flow, money, and stock markets that created papers and money, but did not create a single worthy homeland to be respected."(p 63)

In this gloomy scenario, Al-a'raj reminds Arab nations that the current state of the Arab people, "lost in the sand" and facing "wandering and slow death," is a continuation to the same manners of their ancestors whose overpower, urbanization and well-being diminished and corrupted. The novelist portrayal of the Arabs current state throughout the novel is dystopian par excellent. A close look at the current state of affairs in the political landscape of the Arabs, one finds that Arabs have the worst corrupted political systems in the world. They differ from authoritarian republics to monarchial autocracies. Corruption and deception to their ideals and people are two mutual features they share among themselves.

## CONCLUSION

Based on an unpleasant present, the narrative provides a historical framework to detect the future for Arabs in the year 2084. That is to say, following the Arab Spring and the failing revolution to bring about the desired outcomes for the revolting youth, the novelist seeks the assistance of the Arabs past in which there were wars and conflicts for water, grass and food.

The return of the Americans, Europeans along with the Azarians (The Zionists) indicates that history is repeating itself in this strategic region. The indigenous people of Arabia are doomed to a gloomy future. Whereas other nations develop and move forward, Arabs are tied up to their insignificant remote past. Due to their inappropriate conduct once they have the means by which they could have created remarkable niche in their regional and international geopolitical surroundings; they fell prey to both classical and neocolonial hegemonic powers.

Adam, the Arab-American scientist is engaged in an existential quest for identity. He is an Arab by birth, but an American by education. He received the highest academic degree in nuclear physics. Yet to the American commanders that run Amereupa, he is not more than a terrorist whose American way of bringing him up doesn't make him as much American as Malcom Blair, known as Little Broz who is intertextually linked to Orwell's major character, Big Brother, in 1984. 2084 looks as a mine of intertextual allusions. The narrative is ponderous with many intertexts from all different walks of life. There are references to dozens of international politicians and leaders including Adolf Hilter, Mussolini, George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Ghandi, Hary Troman, and many others. Intertexts extend to include proverbs, novels, stories, poems; historians, economists, poets and anthropologists. Julian Assaang of WikiLeaks is also an important hypertext in this narrative in the same way as Condaliza Rice, the former secretary of the U.S. and her theory of constructive chaos.

This ambitious castrated American official embodies the classical colonial set of binary oppositions: self and other, colonizer and colonized, center and periphery, and black and white. Little Broz and his troops did not bring with them food, medicine and other humanitarian facilities to a quasi-instinct Arabs dwelling the narrative space. Instead, they brought with them gun powders and now working hard to develop a new special atomic bomb to ensure total control over the land and to ensure the defeat of the terrorist organization, perhaps ISIS, which is referred to as al-tandhim. The reference to the Arabs and Muslims as terrorist is prevailing in the narrative. This is an a Euro-American ideology that Arabs and Muslims are terrorists past, present and future.

Ultimately, Wasini Al-a'raj presents a dystopian vision of a future "Arab World" that has lost its way. In fact, the novel draws a bleak picture of the region, depicting the rise of political sectarianism, the institutionalization of corruption, and the disintegration of the Arab world into conflicting small entities. The novel lays bare how the squandering of vast oil wealth, the facilitation of ethnic cleansing, and the proliferation of a "culture of death" have devastated the indigenous population (Pradhan 2017). Al-a'raj's portrayal aligns with analyses highlighting the killing of the region's civilized pluralistic face and the targeting of intellectuals and scientists in many Arab states (Al-a'raj, 2016). Notably, the novel prominently features the distressing refrain "the only good Arab is the dead one" - a dehumanizing sentiment expressed by an American diplomat, which Al-a'raj situates against the backdrop of ongoing violence and oppression against Palestinians (Washington Post, 2008). Overall, *2084* serves as a sobering warning tale, underscoring the high costs of abandoning the region's rich diversity and humanistic traditions in favor of such hateful ideologies. As the novel's conclusion poignantly suggests, the Arab World's future hangs in a precarious balance.

To conclude,

In a sense *2084* as an example of the 21<sup>st</sup> Arabic dystopian text can be read as a parody in a Bakhtinian sense. The problems of the Arabs is a problem of leadership. Had the Arab people been endowed with an atmosphere to choose/elect their leaders, their fate would have been far better. The Arab Spring offered suppressed people glimpses of hope. They started to breath freedom and to imagine that ultimately, it would be possible for them to participate in building their futures away from corruption, dictatorship and agency. However, deep state apparatus gives away Arab youth inspirations for democracy and dignity.

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